

Message Text

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EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

3.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV IS EG US
SUBJ: JHADDAM DISCUSSES JERUSALEM TALKS

REF: STATE 7197

1. KHADDAM RECEIVED ME JANUARY 12, IMMEDIATELY AFTER BOU-MEDIENNE'S DEPARTURE FROM DAMASCUS FOR MOSCOW, FOR BRIEFING ON SUBJECT REFTEL. AFTER LISTENING CAREFULLY, KHADDAM RESPONDED THAT HE FOUND OUR CONTINUED DIALOGUE "USEFUL." NOTED THAT HE IS CONVINCED THE JERUSALEM TALKS WILL FURTHER COMPLICATE THE AREA SITUATION AND PUT/ADDITIONAL OBSTACLES IN PATH OF A SERIOUS PEACE." I RESPONDED THAT WE ARE DETERMINED TO DO OUR BEST TO SEE THAT SUCH DOES NOT HAPPEN AND INTEND GIVE OUR FULLEST SUPPORT TO THESE DISCUSSIONS. WE APPRECIATE NO MAGIC SOLUTION IN SIGHT AND ANTICIPATE DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS.

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2. KHADDAM OBSERVED THAT WE SEEM PERSUADED THAT EGYPT IS THE PRINCIPAL FORCE IN THE ARAB WORLD. THIS IS A MISJUDGEMENT. IT IS AXIOMATIC, HE ASSERTED, THAT EGYPT COUNTS FOR NOTHING IN ISOLATION AND EGYPT IS NOW ISOLATED. "NO ASSIST FROM US INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES AND NO AMOUNT OF SAUDI CAPITAL CAN END THIS ISOLATION AND HELP BRING POSITIVE RESULTS FROM SADAT'S INITIATIVES." HE DISCOURSED

BRIEFLY ON THE FATE OF NATIONAL LEADERS WHO BECOME AGENTS OF FOREIGN POWERS, SADAT, KHADDAM CLAIMED, CAN NO LONGER BE RECEIVED IN ANY ARAB COUNTRY NOR CAN ANY SENIOR EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL SAFELY LEAVE EGYPT. FURTHERMORE, NO EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST WHO WENT TO ISRAEL CAN TODAY TRAVEL TO ANOTHER ARAB COUNTRY. I REPLIED WE AND SYRIA OBVIOUSLY ARE STILL FAR APART IN OUR ASSESSMENT OF STADT'S INITIATIVE. SAID KHADDAM AND OTHERS IN THE SYRIAN LEADERSHIP HAVE APPARENTLY PERSUADED THEMSELVES THAT SADAT HAD ACTED ON AMERICAN INSPIRATION. THIS WAS NOT THE CASE. SAID I WAS REMINDED OF THE LONG-STANDING MUTUAL DISLIKE BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA WHICH IN 1961 HAD TRIGGERED SYRIA'S SECESSION FOR THE UAR. SAID IT APPEARED THAT, REGRETABLY, THIS OLD ANTIPATHY WAS AGAIN AT WORK. THE USG HAD NOT MADE SADAT PRESIDENT OF EGYPT, NOR HAD WE INSPIRED HIS JERUSALEM VISIT; BUT WE ARE DOING TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO SUPPORT ANY INITIATIVE WHICH HOLDS OUT PROMISE OF LEADING TO A COMPREHENSIVE AND JUST PEACE.

3. KHADDAM REMARKED THAT THE US STILL MISUNDERSTANDS SYRIA AND THE "ENDLESS PATIENCE OF OUR PEOPLE TO WAIT OUT PRESENT TENSIONS UNTIL AN HONORABLE REPEAT HONORABLE PEACE CAN BE OBTAINED. FURTHERMORE, WHO GAVE SADAT THE RIGHT TO SPEAK FOR THE ARABS?" REPLIED HE SHOULD NOT ARGUE SADAT WAS ARROGATING THE RIGHT TO SPEAK FOR THE ARABS. THERE WERE PRINCIPLES WHICH CAN BE DEVELOPED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT OF BENEFIT TO ALL THE
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ARABS. THE EGYPTIANS ARE THE ONLY ONES READY TO EXPLORE WHAT CAN BE WORKED OUT. AS FOR THE FONMIN'S PROPOSITION THAT WE MISUNDERSTAND SYRIA, IT SEEMED TO ME THE SAME COULD BE SAID ABOUT SYRIAN MISPRECEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES. TOO FEW SYRIANS GRANT THE SINCERITY OF OUR EFFORTS FOR A JUST PEACE. OUR INTERESTS REQUIRE THIS. FURTHERMORE, OUR TRADITION OF IDEALISM IS MOVING THIS ADMINISTRATION, AS IT HAD ITS PREDECESSORS TO HELP ESTABLISH PEACE IN THE AREA.

4. REVERTING TO THE HISTORIC ROLE OF SYRIA, KHADDAM RECALLED THAT IT HAD BEEN SYRIA WHO HAD LIBERATED EGYPT FROM THE CRUSADERS AND AN ALEPPAN WHO HAD HELPED FREE EGYPT FROM NAPOLEON'S OCCUPATION BY ASSASSINATING HIS AID, GENERAL KLEBER. WASHINGTON ERRS IN EXAGGERATING EGYPT'S LEADERSHIP ROLE. HE DISPARAGED THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE, ASSERTING THAT "FORTY PERCENT OF THEM HAVE NO INTEREST IN POLITICS AND TEN MILLION EGYPTIANS THINK THAT FAROUK STILL RULES CAIRO. IN SYRIA EVERY CITIZEN IS PLOICICALLY CONSCIOUS".

5. I ASKED KHADDAM IF HE WAS TROUBLED B THE PACE OF DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENTS. SPECIFICALLY WAS HE SUGGESTING THAT THE US GOVERNMENT WAS TOO MUCH IN A HURRY IN ITS

EFFORTS FOR PEACE? HE REPLIED, "NO, WE KNOW YOUR POLICY;
IT IS PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT THE US GOVERNMENT IS IN ON
HURRY WHATSOEVER IN ITS EFFORTS TO AFFECT EVENTS IN THE AREA."
THE "NEW US-EGYPT-ISRAEL AXIS" HE CONCLUDED, HAS HELPED
THE ARABS A GREAT DEAL. WHERE SOME ELEMENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD
FORMERLY WERE NOT AS SURE OF THEIR POSITIONS AS THEY
SHOULD HAVE BEEN, CURRENT US POLICY IS HELPING TO CLARIFY THE
ISSUES IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE AND EVENTUALLY, WHILE
NO DATE COULD BE SET, A TRUE PEACE WILL BE WORKED OUT.
THE US WILL THEN SEE IT IS SYRIA THAT HAS BEEN RIGHT ALL ALONG.

6. COMMENT: RECENT VISITORS WHO HAVE MET WITH KHADDAN, ASSAD AND
OTHERS IN THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT
THE SOLE MOTIVATION OPERATING HERE AGAINST SADAT'S INITIATIVE
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IS JEALOUSY OF EGYPTIAN ASSERTION OF LEADERSHIP; THIS CONVERSATION
DID NOTHING TO DISPEL SUCH AN IMPRESSION. WE BELIEVE OTHER, EQUALLY
STRONG FORCES ARE AT WORK, BUT WHATEVER DAMASCUS HAS UP ITS
SLEEVE AS A POLICY TO ACHIEVE PEACE, THE SYRIANS ARE
STILL ABLE TO BE UNWILLING TO DEFINE IT. BEYOND VAGUE STATEMENT
ABOUT "BUILDING ON THE WORK OF THE TRIPOLI SUMMIT." KHADDAM'S
REFERENCE TO SAUDI MONEY IS THE FIRST HE HAS MADE TO THIS
SUBJECT, SUGGESTING THAT RIYADH MAY HAVE BEGUN TO TURN THE
SCREWS ON DAMASCUS.
MURPHY

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